(d) whether the country is affected by the incidents happening in the neighbouring countries; and

(e) if so, whether any action would be initiated to streamline his Ministry to make them accountable to the nation?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIJ AS WANT SINGH): (a) to (e) Government is alert to all important developments in India's neighbourhood and particularly to those which could affect national interest. The Government is responsive to the legitimate concerns, needs and problems of the people of Indian origin.

Pak-former Prime Minister's visit to India

2670. SHRI ABANI ROY : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the former Prime Minister of Pakistan has recently paid a visit to India and held discussions with various leaders including Prime Minister,

(b) if so, the details of the discussions held and outcome thereof:

(c) whether Government hope any peaceful relations with Pakistan after her visit to India; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASW ANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Former Pakistan Prime Minister Mrs. Benazir Bhutto paid a private visit to India, from 25-29 November, 2001, on an invitation from the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). On 26th November she addressed a meeting organized bytheCII.

Government extended all the usual courtesies due to a former Head of Government.

(c) and (d) India has always endeavored to build peaceful, friendly and cooperative ties with Pakistan. As in the past, this shall also continue to be our endeavor in the future.

Maoist attacks in Nepal

2671. SHRI ABANI ROY : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether in view of the recent activities of Maoist rebels in Nepal, the lives and properties of Indians there are in danger;

(b) if so, whether attacks have been made at the residences and business establishments of Indians in Nepal by Maoist rebels;

(c) if so, whether Govcemment have sought detailed report in this regard and have taken up the issue with the Nepalese Government; and

(d) if so, the other steps Government propose to take to safeguard die lives of Indians in Nepal?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIJ AS WANT SINGH): (a) to (d) Consequent to the unilateral withdrawal from dialogue by Maoists and subsequent widespread violence resorted to by them in Nepal since November 23, Government of Nepal has initiated a number of steps including the declaration of a nationwide emergency and issuance of the Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Control and Punishment Ordinance on November 26 to restore normalcy and order in the country. Security personnel, including the Royal Nepalese Army, have launched operations against the Maoists.

Abductions, extortion and intimidation of members of the business community in Nepal, including those of Indian origin, have been resorted to in the past by Maoists in Nepal. However, targeting of any specific group or community, including Indians, has not come to our notice.

India has extended its support to Government of Nepal for the steps taken by it to restore normalcy and maintain peace and security in the country. Governments of both countries are in touch with each other in this regard and the Indian States bordering Nepal and agencies concerned are also keeping a close vigil.

Cancellation of Prime Minister's business meeting in Russia

2672. SHRI R. SARATH KUMAR : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister's business meeting in Russia was called off during his recent visit over there; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH):

(a) No,Sir

(b) Does not arise.